

BOOKS.

"En hoexkens ende boexkens."

It is late in the day to say a word about Count Tolstoi's "Childhood, Boyhood, Youth" (Walter Scott, 24, Warwick Lane), but we will venture to do so, seeing that our point of view is not that of the general critic. There is possibly no known field of research in which so little available work has been done as in that of child-nature. The "fair land" lies under our very eyes, but whoso would map it out must write "Unexplored" across vast tracts. Thoughtful persons begin to suspect that the mistakes we make through this ignorance are grievous and injurious. For example, are not all our schemes of education founded on the presumption that a child's mind—his "thinking, feeling man"—begins "very small," and grows great with the growth of his body? We cannot tell if this is indeed the case. The children keep themselves to themselves in a general way, their winning ways and frank confidences notwithstanding; but if one of us does, by chance, get a child revealed to him, he is startled to find that the child has by far the keener intelligence, the wiser thoughts, the larger soul of the two. When genius is able to lift the veil and show us a child, it does a service which, in our present state of thought, we are hardly able to appraise; and when genius or simplicity, or both, shall have given us enough such studies to generalise upon, we shall doubtless reconsider the whole subject, and shall be dismayed at the slights we have been putting upon the children in the name of education. Count Tolstoi gives us here unmistakable child-portraiture, miniatures in which a mother may see her child and recognise what and how much there is in him.

"Like our own dear mother," the little fellow writes, in the verses he makes for his grandmother's birthday; and then when the verses come to be read, ah! the humiliation of soul he goes through, and how surely he expects father and grandmother to find him out for a hypocrite. "Why did I write it? She's not here, and it was not necessary to mention her; I love grandma, it's true; I reverence her, but still she is not the same. Why did I write it? Why have I lied?" This is the sort of thing there is in children. We recognise it as we read, and remember the dim, childish days when we, too, had an "organ of truth" just so exquisitely delicate; and the recollection should quicken our reverence for the tender consciences of children.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

Being deeply interested in the good work of the P.N.E.U., I heartily welcome the promised "House of Education," in relation to which I desire to say a few words. Probably I am not wrong in the conclusion that its details are still in an embryonic stage, but I read in this month's *Review* that "one of its functions is the training of nurses." May I suggest that of even more weighty importance is the training of "mothers"?

Let me explain my meaning clearly. There may be, doubtless there are, at the present moment scores of conscientious women who, noting a grievous deficiency in the moral qualities of those to whom the guardianship of children is entrusted, are moved to make for progress in the ranks of nurses and teachers. For these any training school raising the standard of such employées will be an inestimable boon. But for these scores of earnest "seekers after light" there are hundreds of other women, present and future mothers, whose lamentable frivolity and blindness to responsibility permit them to bestow less care and attention upon the choice of a nurse or a governess than they habitually give to that of a dress or a trinket. Again, there are many higher-natured girls who fail in the fulfilment of their duties simply from lack of opportunity to learn what (even under better arrangements for efficient nurses) it will remain their primary province, as mothers, to comprehend and supervise. That the conscientious nurse is a *rara avis* is undeniable; is the conscientious mother less exceptional? I fear not; this same and all-important quality of conscientiousness having been, unfortunately, eliminated from our code of instruction in the last half-century. The course of education, to-day prolonged into womanhood, and too often forming only the prelude to a public career, has left no leisure for the practice of domestic duties. All knowledge of the needs and training of children, all experience of management that tends to home comfort (knowledge that cannot be gained by theory) is necessarily wanting when the recognised highest ambition of young womanhood is a public out-of-door career. The deplorable results are—ignorant mothers and housewives, incapable nurses, slatternly neglected homes. What *can* be the future of generations whose parents do not even possess a "tradition" of the duties and responsibilities they alone could and should impart?

This being the evil, shall we not endeavour to find a remedy? Fashion, which has been so actively working against us, may doubtless be won over to our side now that the sense of our thinkers has discovered a kindred

want. I would suggest, then, that with the House of Education should be affiliated practical classes for the training of young ladies in every detail appertaining to the management and direction of a household—viz., the thorough knowledge of housekeeping in all its branches; the minutiae of economical expenditure; useful needlework; marketing in application to household as well as personal requisites; the proper control and direction of servants, whether housemaid, cook, parlour-maid, or nurse; sanitation as a practical science; the nurture and hygienic training of children. I would endeavour to introduce the idea that a twelvemonth's training at the House of Education was a necessary complement to all school instruction; in the lower class, for the future servant; in the higher, for the future mistress. The advantages to both are too obvious to need further remark.

The frivolous may ridicule an unwelcome innovation, but let public opinion once recognise its utility, we shall see this Domestic College taking its place as an important factor in the education of our girls.

I must not now trespass further on your space to amplify minor details. Let me emphasise the fact, however, that the hours are to be spent in "practical" work under competent instructors, and efficiency should meet with its guerdon of certificates, &c. I venture to hope that many others will agree with me and co-operate in forwarding the proposed plan.

ROSALIND.

The above interesting communication calls for a reply. In the first place, we have to thank the writer for a useful suggestion—that we should get hints from the readers of the *Parents' Review*. We shall be very glad to have the whole subject of the "House of Education" thoroughly threshed out. In order that our correspondents may not write in the dark, we subjoin the forecast of the House of Education issued in the prospectus of 1888, which went under the name of the "Draft proof":—

"There is a near prospect of a House of Education, where young ladies who have left school, ladies proposing to teach in families, and, under different arrangements, young women qualifying for nursemaids, shall be taught:—

- (a) The laws of health;
- (b) The right ordering of a nursery and home school-room;
- (c) The principles which underlie the moral and mental growth of a child, and how to train him according to his nature;
- (d) The most rapid and rational methods of teaching;
- (e) And, especially, how to train a child's senses by means of out-of-door work, by teaching him to know, name, and delight in natural objects."

Added to this, we hope the House of Education may prove a delightful country "retreat" for young mothers, where they may bring their children for a while and be relieved of the care of them, getting for themselves the refreshment of new ideas about the training of children. So far our programme is definite. Further, the editor is constrained to be definite as to the lines on which "education" is to be taught. She receives, perhaps, weekly applications, amounting to entreaties in their earnestness, for governesses and nurses prepared to train children on the lines of "Home

Education." To meet this urgent demand is a primary object of the "House of Education."

The names of the ladies who consent to form the Council of the House of Education will appear later.

It will be easy in a large household to add practical instruction in all parts of domestic management to the curriculum, and we are much obliged to "Rosalind" for calling our attention to the matter. On one point we must beg leave to differ from her. Surely, if the present day education of girls has one marked characteristic, it is that it tends to develop conscientiousness. We feel, indeed, that the success of the P.N.E.U., and of the *Parents' Review*, is greatly owing to the diffusion of intelligent conscientiousness amongst educated mothers; and it is to this increased sense of parental responsibility that we look for the furtherance of the "House of Education."—ED.

I have taught many children to read, and in almost every case with nothing but pleasure on both sides. I find it best in teaching letters to teach them in pairs, capital and small ones together, as it may dishearten a child, and puzzle it, to find there is another alphabet to be learnt after one has been acquired. It is well to have several sets of letters of different sizes, and to pick out those known from advertisements, &c. The words of two letters are best learned by sticking them on separate bits of card, and having them picked out. The next step is to make plays with a spelling-game—turn a cat into a hat, a rat, &c., ham into jam, and so on—one set each day; then find these words in the lists beginning reading lessons, and only begin reading the lesson when all the words in it are already known. I have found nothing so good as Nelson's Step-by-Step Series for teaching reading, but for the sake of variety it is as well to use other little easy books at the same time. Jennet Humphrey's "Laugh and Learn" is very good (Blackie & Son); it contains pretty games, writing and drawing lessons, and other amusements, as well as reading. Every lesson should wind up with a song or game by way of a treat, which will be forfeited by carelessness or inattention.

A MOTHER IN INDIA.